

Senator Michelle Kidani

Twenty-ninth Hawaii State Legislature

(D) Senate District 18 – Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Senate Vice President

Chair: Committee on Education

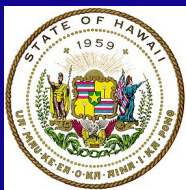
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Aloha, friends and neighbors,

Our 2017 legislative session adjourned earlier this month. Much of the discussion in the final days was consumed by debate over SB 1183 that put forth a proposal to assist the city with financing for the rail transit project. Our Senate bill proposed a reasonable extension of the General Excise Tax surcharge of a half-percent that Oahu residents currently pay. A counter-proposal by the House would have substantially raised the hotel room tax on all islands to pay for rail, and added other non-transit-related provisions that confused the issue. In the end, there was no meeting of the minds on the measure, leaving the city with limited resources and options to support future construction. It is possible that the matter could be considered in a special session later this year. SB 1183 remains "alive," however, and could be brought before us in the 2018 session for some kind of resolution.

Next month, all households in my Senate district will receive a special newsletter summarizing the session and highlighting our accomplishments in several areas. On the next page are some notes about important education issues we addressed in the state budget.

Below you will see news about the new Superintendent of Education - **Dr. Christina Kishimoto** - who will lead the DOE beginning August 1, 2017. As you may know, I was among many - including HSTA, the teachers' union - who expressed disappointment that neither of the finalists was from Hawaii. However, members of both the Board of Education's search committee and the citizen's advisory group with whom I spoke were enthusiastic and unanimous in their choice of finalists. As Chair of the Senate's Committee on Education, I was also given the opportunity to speak privately with each of the finalists, and was equally impressed with their credentials and the way they articulated their approach to meeting education goals. I join with the Board in welcoming Dr. Kishimoto to Hawaii and to the DOE, and certainly wish her every success in her work on behalf of our administrators, teachers and students.

Me Ke Aloha Pumehana,

Board of Education selects new Superintendent

Education effective August 1, 2017. The Board had identified two finalists – both from the mainland – earlier this month.

“Because both finalists were so highly qualified, it was a difficult decision for the Board,” said BOE Chairperson Lance Mizumoto, who led the committee that conducted the search. “In the end, however, we felt that Dr. Kishimoto has the right combination of experience, knowledge, and focus to implement the strategic vision for educational change set forth in the Governor’s Blueprint for Education and the BOE/DOE newly revised joint strategic plan.”

Dr. Kishimoto said she was honored and excited to accept the Superintendent’s position. “In partnership with Chair Mizumoto and the Board . . . I look forward to implementing a vision of excellence for all students. I look forward to working hand in hand with Hawaii’s teachers, leaders, staff, parents, community members, and student leaders to execute on this vision of high quality college, career, and community readiness.”



Dr. Christina Kishimoto

Notes from the Capitol ~ 2017 Legislative Session



As noted, much of the discussion following our legislative session focused on the rail-financing issue. Unfortunately, this has overshadowed many of our significant accomplishments that can have a real impact on addressing the needs of Hawaii residents. As noted last month, the budget we approved includes funds to expand the state's **Early College** initiative and the **Keiki Healthy Start and Ready-to-Learn** health assessment program in our elementary schools.

Here are some notes about other significant education items we worked on this year:

Addressing our chronic teacher shortage, requires innovative thinking. In working with the DOE, UH Manoa College of Education, and other stakeholders we identified hundreds of substitute teachers and education assistants who already

work regularly in schools where it's hard to assign and keep teachers. In an innovative attempt to fill the permanent vacancies, **I secured \$400,000 in the budget for a new Teacher Stipend program.** This program would create a stipend for current education professionals in our hard-to-fill schools to earn their teacher certifications and become full time teachers. At my request, UH Manoa and UH West Oahu are discussing a curriculum specifically targeting substitutes and EAs to get them fully certified through evening and weekend courses in a timely and efficient manner.

Rising college tuition should not be a deterrent to students who want to advance themselves through higher education. To ensure that our students are able to pursue post-secondary education to remain competitive in the workforce, **the Legislature appropriated \$1.8 million for a "Hawaii Promise" program** for students at community colleges who need extra help meeting their tuition expenses.

The hospitality industry continues to grow on Oahu's west side. Late last year it was announced that a new hotel would be opening in Ko Olina with the intent to cater to Chinese visitors. Clearly, our students will need to be exposed to both the Mandarin language and Chinese culture to prepare themselves for some of the hundreds of new job openings that will come with the opening of this new destination. **I helped to secure a Grant-in-Aid to begin these programs at DOE schools.** We have already met several times with Jeff Stone and the Resort Group, UH West Oahu, the DOE, and other stakeholders to ensure that our *keiki* have access to education and workforce training opportunities that will prepare them for the future workforce. This will benefit not only residents of West and Central Oahu, but is also a big step closer to improving our work-live-play environment. And – no small matter – more job opportunities in west Oahu could go a long way toward alleviating some of the traffic headed to town.

Watch for a special edition of our legislative newsletter to be mailed to all households next month with detailed listings of bills we passed and issues we addressed.



The Senate ~ Twenty-ninth Legislature, Regular Session of 2017

A Day for Celebrating!



The Mililani High School Class of 2017 numbered almost 600, with nearly 400 seniors graduating with honors – with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher. Some of the 46 Valedictorians (4.0 GPA or better) are pictured below. **Sarah Igarashi** got big-screen time (at right) above the stadium goal posts as Valedictorian speaker; she earned an impressive 4.27 GPA.



Congratulations to graduating Trojan senior Tyler Labonte (at right), one of just 3 Hawaii public school finalists in the **US Presidential Scholars Program**. Tyler is also one of 10 National Merit finalists from the islands, earning a \$2,500 scholarship. Mililani graduates were awarded an impressive **\$18.6 million** in prizes and grants to support their college studies.



Blue and Gold filled the Blaisdell Arena (at right) as more than 500 seniors from **Waipahu High School** received their diplomas. Another of Hawaii's 3 public school **Presidential Scholar finalists** is Waipahu High School's **Jommel Macaraeg** (at left). Jommel earned a 4.075 GPA and was active in the WHS Academy of Health and Sciences. **Good work, Jommel!**



Waipahu's graduates included 23 Valedictorians (4.0 GPA or better and completing the requirement of at least one Honors Recognition Certificate. Marauder seniors accumulated a whopping **\$25.3 million** in grants and scholarship awards.



I was honored to be invited to **UH West Oahu's spring commencement** during which nearly 320 students – the largest graduating class to date – received bachelor's degrees and certificates in more than a dozen fields of study. Grads, families and friends celebrated at the beautiful UHWO campus under sunny blue skies. **Good work, graduates!**





It was a real pleasure to join students and advisors from **Waipahu High School's Youth for Safety Club** for a year-end dinner. The girls started as a traffic safety group and then became involved in advocacy against domestic violence and sexual assault. With me from left to right, **Marci Lopes** from Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, **Chrizzenn Gamayo**, advisor **Miki Nishizawa**, **Marea Rayza Parinas**, advisor **Kel Hirohata** (in the back), **Taylor Fujimoto**, and Waipahu High School Principal **Keith Hayashi**.
Keep up the good work, girls!

In a previous legislative session, I sponsored a resolution asking the Board of Education to officially establish a **Seal of Biliteracy** for Hawaii public school students. **Beginning with seniors graduating in the Class of 2017**, the seal is awarded to students who demonstrate a high proficiency in either of the State's two official languages, English and Hawaiian, and at least one additional language, including American Sign Language. The program encourages students to be college, career and community ready in a global society. It establishes an educational culture that recognizes and values the wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity that students bring to their classrooms.

At right is the winning design for the seal as created by **Waianae High School senior Javen Towne** in a logo contest conducted over the past several months. Hawaii joins 24 other states and the District of Columbia that encourage language studies by awarding this recognition.

Two students from **Mililani High School** will be spending part of their summer on a China study tour thanks to travel grants from the **Pacific and Asian Affairs Council**. **Maysa Segovia** (left) and **Jessica Jones** earned the grants by their academic and service activities and demonstrating exceptional understanding of world issues. The PAAC study tour will offer opportunities for Maysa and Jessica to broaden their perspectives through exposure to Chinese culture, cuisine and customs. *Congratulations!*



May Day events offer a great opportunity to visit our elementary school campuses. At left, I shared time with program emcees **Kylie Kreiner & Shelby Seu** at **Mililani Uka Elementary** on May 12. At right, dancers at **Waipio Gentry's Kanoelani Elementary** on May 17.

Students love the celebration – maybe in part because they know the school year is almost over! *Mahalo for inviting me to join you!*



The **Education Commission of the States (ECS)** – a national organization in which I have been active – has named the State of Hawaii as the 2017 recipient of the prestigious **Frank Newman Award for Innovation**.

The award is named for a former, longtime president of ECS. It recognizes the Hawaii Department of Education for broadly-supported and impactful education improvement efforts, focusing on school accountability for student college and career readiness, and support for teachers and administrators statewide.

Congratulations to our educational leaders, staff and teachers for putting Hawaii on the map for State Innovation.